



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

BOSTON, Feb. 1, 1859.

DEAR SIR, — I regret extremely that the state of my health will not allow me to attend the special meeting to-night, to be held in "respect to the memory of our late distinguished associate," Mr. Prescott.

I should regret still more to be thought insensible to his great fame and merit, or to doubt his title to any tribute which the Society, this city, and the world of letters, may unite to bestow upon him.

Please to consider me as personally with you, and warmly approving of all you shall do or say in memory of him.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

RUFUS CHOATE.

Rev. CHANDLER ROBBINS, D.D.,

Recording Secretary of the Historical Society.

FEBRUARY MEETING.

The Society held their stated monthly meeting on Thursday, Feb. 10, at noon, at their rooms in Tremont Street, Boston; the President, Hon. ROBERT C. WINTHROP, in the chair.

The Librarian being absent, the Recording Secretary announced donations from the American Baptist Missionary Union; the American Unitarian Association; the Boston Provident Association; the County Commissioners of Barnstable County; the Back-Bay Commissioners; C. C. Henshaw, Esq.; T. J. Herring, Esq.; Henry B. Dawson, Esq.; J. H. Hammond; L. A. H. Latour; Mrs. J. F. Baldwin; T. C. Amory, Esq.; Dr. E. B. O'Callaghan; T. B. Lawrence, Esq.; George H. Kuhn, Esq.; N. P. Kemp, Esq.; Samuel A. Green,

M.D.; F. A. Benson, Esq.; Rev. J. P. Robinson; William Durrant Cooper, Esq.; and from Messrs. Bartlett, Lamson, Robbins, Shurtleff, Sibley, Whitney, and Winthrop, of the Society.

The Corresponding Secretary read a letter of acceptance from Hon. Levi Lincoln, as a Resident Member.

HON. GEORGE T. BIGELOW and HON. CALEB CUSHING were elected Resident Members; Hon. J. J. CRITTENDEN, of Kentucky, an Honorary, and BENJAMIN R. WINTHROP, Esq., of New York, a Corresponding Member.

Mr. QUINCY presented a copy of the "Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, prepared by himself at the request of his children," on a blank leaf of which Mr. Quincy had inscribed a few reminiscences of the author, and a cordial tribute to his character, in the following terms; viz., —

With Colonel Tallmadge it was my privilege, fifty years ago, to be on terms of great intimacy. In 1808 and 1809, being both members of Congress, we resided in the same hotel, in adjoining rooms, and often passed together long winter evenings. I availed myself of these opportunities to draw from him anecdotes of the war of the Revolution, and heard him relate almost all those incidents mentioned in this memoir, with many additional circumstances, which, from his great modesty, are here omitted. The frontispiece to this memoir, I doubt not, was an excellent likeness at the period when it was drawn. At the age of fifty-two, his tall and commanding figure and noble bearing, united with polished and courteous manners, and a kindness of heart which won universal confidence, rendered him one of the most interesting men I ever knew.

He was one of the most active partisans of the army, and received peculiar marks of confidence from its Commander-in-chief, whose personal superintendence of the details of secret expeditions is one of the impressive results of this memoir.

JOSIAH QUINCY.

10th February, 1859.

Mr. ADAMS, from the Committee appointed to resist before the Legislature any infringement of the corporate name of the Society, made a verbal report, which was accepted. Whereupon, the following vote was unanimously passed; viz., —

Voted, That this Society approve and ratify the doings of their Committee, as reported by Mr. Adams; and, commending the spirit in which they have met the Committee of the Historic-Genealogical Society, request them to continue in office, with full power to make any arrangement which may settle the point in controversy, and tend to a desirable harmony between the two Societies.

Mr. EVERETT, expressing regret at his inability to join the Society in the last tribute of respect to the memory of Mr. Prescott, paid by them on the 1st instant, asked permission to add a few words, that, as a friend of more than forty years' standing, he might not seem wanting on an occasion of such affecting interest.

MR. PRESIDENT, — At the special meeting of the Society, held on the 1st instant, to take becoming notice of the death of our honored and lamented associate, Mr. Prescott, you kindly apologized, with your usual thoughtfulness, for my necessary absence. I was in the State of New Jersey that

day, under a public engagement; and it was only by the aid of the telegraph that I received the notice of the meeting. You will readily believe that I regretted most deeply my inability to join you in the last tribute of respect to the memory of our friend, paid with so much feeling and pathetic eloquence, on behalf of the Massachusetts Historical Society, by our worthy associates who took part in that day's proceedings. If I now ask permission to add a few words to what was so appropriately and touchingly said by them, it is not that the departed needs my poor testimony; not that the Society needs my aid in doing honor to his beloved name; but that I myself, the friend of more than forty years' standing, may not seem wanting on an occasion of such affecting interest.

Being about to leave home on Monday, the 24th of January, on a visit to Philadelphia, and taking my accustomed walk in the middle of the day on the Saturday preceding, I met our late lamented and beloved associate. He seemed to me as well as at any time the past twelvemonth; but my son, who was with me, thought his countenance somewhat changed. On the following Friday, the telegraph transmitted the news of his death to Philadelphia; where, I think I can truly say, it was mourned as deeply and sincerely as anywhere in Boston, out of the circle of immediate relatives and friends. They felt his death as a loss, not of any one place, but of the whole country. And this feeling I found universally prevalent in a somewhat extensive circuit since made in New Jersey; in New York, where a most distinguished brother historian (Mr. Bancroft) gave utterance, in language the most appropriate and impressive, to the unaffected sorrow of the community; and in the neighboring city of Brooklyn, which I have since visited. Everywhere, Mr. President, those tributes of respect and affection which have been paid to our dear friend by his neighbors, associates, and immediate fellow-citizens, have found a ready response throughout the country, as they will throughout the civilized world.

I can add nothing to what has been already said in the general contemplation of his eminence as an author, his worth as a man, his geniality as a companion, his fidelity as a friend; his severe trials, his heroic exertions, his glorious success. But I have thought it might be in my power to say a few words, not unacceptably, of the rapidity and the extent to which his reputation was established abroad, and the prompt and generous recognition of his ability in Europe. The "History of Ferdinand and Isabella" was published at the close of 1837 or the beginning of 1838; and, on my arrival in Europe in the summer of 1840, I found it extensively known and duly appreciated. Mr. Prescott, following down the stream of Spanish history, had already conceived the project of writing, at some future period, the history of Philip II., after he should have narrated, in works to be prepared in the interval, the magnificent episodes of the "Conquest of Mexico and Peru." I remonstrated with him for passing over the reign of the Emperor Charles V.; urging upon him, that the materials which had become accessible since Robertson's time, especially the archives of Simancas (the want of access to which was so much deplored by that author), would enable him to treat that period to as good advantage as that of Ferdinand and Isabella, or Philip. But he modestly persisted in thinking that the reign of Charles V. was exhausted by Robertson. The supplementary chapter with which he has enriched the edition of Robertson's work, published under his supervision a few years since, is a sufficient proof that it would have been in his power to construct an original history of the reign of Charles V., which would have fully equalled in interest any that has been produced by him.

He requested me to make some preliminary inquiries at Paris in reference to materials for Philip II.; especially to obtain information as to the portion of the archives of Simancas which had been carried in the time of Napoleon to Paris,

and were still detained there. No difficulty attended a thorough exploration of the rich materials in the royal library; but the papers from Simancas were guarded with greater care in the "Archives of the Kingdom." The whole of that celebrated national collection had been transported to Paris in the time of Napoleon; and after his downfall, and in the general restoration, those portions of the archives which purported to relate to the history of France were, in spite of the urgent and oft-repeated reclamations of the Spanish Government, retained in Paris. It was natural, under these circumstances, that they should be watched with some jealousy: but the name of Mr. Prescott was a key which unlocked the depository; and by the kindness of M. Mignet, who had himself examined them with diligence, they were fully thrown open to my inspection on his behalf.

The same result followed a similar application at Florence the following year. Not only were the private collections of the Marquis Gino Capponi and the Count Guicciardini (the lineal descendant of the historian) thrown open to the use of Mr. Prescott, but, after tedious hesitations and delays on the part of subordinate officials, a peremptory order was at length issued by Prince Corsini, with the consent of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, that I should be allowed to explore the Medicean Archives (*Archivio Mediceo*), and mark for transcription whatever I thought would be useful for Mr. Prescott. When I add that this magnificent collection of eighty thousand volumes (since greatly augmented, as I learn from my friend Mr. Ticknor, by bringing together all the provincial archives of every part of the Grand Duchy), the examination of which was rendered easy by a copious index, contained the correspondence of the Tuscan minister at Madrid, during the entire reign of Philip II., it will be readily conceived how rich were the materials for the history of that period. Nothing that I marked for transcription was refused. It was sufficient that

I thought it would be useful to Mr. Prescott; and among the portions of the correspondence which I was able in this way to procure for him were the semi-weekly communications of the Tuscan minister on the arrest, imprisonment, and death of Don Carlos. That papers so delicate — guarded with such jealousy for three centuries — should have been fully thrown open by a Catholic sovereign to an American Protestant writer, bears witness at once to the liberality of the Grand Duke, and the European reputation of our lamented friend.

Nor was his fame less promptly and substantially established in England. Calling one day on the venerable Mr. Thomas Grenville, whom I found in his library (the second in size and value of the private libraries of England), reading Xenophon's "Anabasis" in the original, I made some passing remark on the beauty of that work. "Here," said he, holding up a volume of "Ferdinand and Isabella," "is one far superior." With the exception of the Nestor of our literature (Mr. Irving), no American writer appeared to me so widely known or so highly esteemed in England as Mr. Prescott; and, when he visited that country a few years later, the honors paid to him by all the cultivated classes of society, from the throne downward, were such as are seldom offered to the most distinguished visitant.

This is not the time nor the place for a critical disquisition on the merits of our lamented associate as a writer of history; nor am I prepared — arrived but last evening from an arduous journey, filled up with engagements which have left me no moment of leisure — to undertake the task. It would, moreover, be a work of supererogation. The public mind has passed judgment on his merits, in a manner to need no confirmation and to fear no contradiction. When, in after-times, the history of our American literature shall be written, it will be told with admiration, how, in the front rank of a school of contemporary historical writers flourishing in the United States in the second quarter of the nineteenth century,

more numerous and not less distinguished than those of any other country, a young man, who was not only born to affluence and exposed to all its seductions, but who seemed forced into inaction by the cruel accident of his youth, devoted himself to that branch of literary effort which seems most to require the eyesight of the student, and composed a series of historical works not less remarkable for their minute and accurate learning, than their beauty of style, calm philosophy, acute delineation of character, and sound good sense. No name more brilliant than his will descend to posterity on the roll of American authors.

But it will not be in this Association alone that he will be honored in after-times. So long as in ages far distant, and not only in countries now refined and polished, but in those not yet brought into the domain of civilization, the remarkable epoch which he has described shall attract the attention of men; so long as the consolidation of the Spanish monarchy and the expulsion of the Moors, the mighty theme of the discovery of America, the sorrowful glories of Columbus, the mail-clad forms of Cortez and Pizarro and the other grim *conquistadores*, trampling new-found empires under the hoofs of their cavalry, shall be subjects of literary interest; so long as the blood shall curdle at the cruelties of Alva, and the fierce struggles of the Moslem in the East, — so long will the writings of our friend be read. With respect to some of them, time, in all human probability, will add nothing to his materials. It was said the other day by our respected associate, President Sparks (a competent authority), that no historian, ancient or modern, exceeded Mr. Prescott in the depth and accuracy of his researches. He has driven his artesian criticism through wretched modern compilations, and the trashy exaggerations of intervening commentators, down to the original contemporary witnesses; and the sparkling waters of truth have gushed up from the living rock. In the details of his narrative, farther light may be

obtained from sources not yet accessible. The first letter of Cortez may be brought to light; the hieroglyphics of Palenque may be deciphered: but the history of the Spanish Empire, during the period for which he has treated it, will be read by posterity for general information, not in the ancient Spanish authors, not in black-letter chronicles, but in the volumes of Prescott.

Finally, sir, among the masters of historical writing — the few great names of ancient and modern renown in this department — our lamented friend and associate has passed to a place among the most honored and distinguished. Whenever this branch of polite literature shall be treated of by some future Bacon, and the names of those shall be repeated who have possessed in the highest degree that rare skill by which the traces of a great plan in the fortunes of mankind are explored, and the living body of a nation is dissected by the keen edge of truth, and guilty kings and guilty races summoned to the bar of justice, and the footsteps of God pointed out along the pathways of time, his name will be mentioned with the immortal trios of Greece and of Rome, and the few who in the modern languages stand out the rivals of their fame.

No one can speak of our dear departed friend without recollecting the infirmity under which he labored the greater part of his days, and with which Providence, in his case, applied the solemn law of compensation, by which the blessings of life are enjoyed, and endowments balanced by sorrows. To some it is given to ascend the heights of fame through the narrow and cheerless path of penury. Others toil patiently on beneath a load of domestic care and bereavement, — the loss of the dutiful, the hopeful, and the beloved. For him that dares to intrude on public life (as our friend never did), ferocious detraction stands ready to fly at his throat, and petty malice to yelp at his heels. Our friend achieved the miracle of his unexampled success under the privation — at

times the total privation — of the dearest of the senses, — that through which the spirit of man is wedded to the lovely forms of the visible universe. At intervals, for some years before he commenced his historical labors, for him, as for the kindred genius by whose example he tells us he took courage, —

“Seasons returned; but not for him returned
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine.”

But he went from his darkened chamber and his couch of pain to his noble work, as a strong man rejoicing to run a race. A kind Providence at intervals raised the veil from his eyes, and his sweet resignation and heroic fortitude turned his trials into a blessing. His impaired sight gave him concentrated mental vision: and so he lived his great day, illustrious without an enemy, successful without an envier; wrought out his four historical epics to the admiration of the age; and passed away at the grand climacteric, not of years alone, but of love and fame.

“Τὸν πέρι Μοῦσ' ἐφίλησε, δίδου δ' ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε·
Ὀφθαλμῶν μὲν ἄμερσε, δίδου δ' ἠδεῖαν αἰοδῆν.”

SPECIAL MEETING.

A special meeting of the Society was held this evening (Thursday, the 24th of February), at the residence of Hon. Edward Everett.

In opening the meeting at half-past seven o'clock, the President remarked, that the evening had been selected